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ABSTRACT

This study proposed to establish priorities for educational research into specific issue areas over the next 5 years in Ontario (Canada). Structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 104 selected individuals representing different areas of education, including the universities, faculties of education, school board officials, federations, trustees, organized labor, employers, government and nongovernment agencies, and others. The conclusions drawn indicate that priority should be given to: (1) the application of information technology in education; (2) a longitudinal study of students, including identifiable subpopulations, as they proceed through the educational system, to ascertain the effects and utility of programs and methods; and (3) the operation of the postsecondary sector, including questions of purpose, governance, financing, and accessibility. Within or in addition to the above, emphasis is warranted on questions of curriculum and instructional effectiveness, including the utilization of staff, transition to work, and continuing education. Data are presented in appendixes, as are lists of interview questions, potential research priorities, and respondents to the study. (Author/FWR)

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AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH IN EDUCATION THROUGH 1987

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October 1982

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish priorities for research into specific issue areas over the next five years.

Structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with 104 selected individuals representing the Universities, CAATs, Faculties of Education, OISE, School Board Officials, Federations, Trustees, Organized Labour, Employers, and Government and Non-government agencies.

The conclusions drawn indicate that priority should be given to:

1. the application of information technology to education;

2. a longitudinal study of students, including identifiable subpopulations, as they proceed through the educational system, to ascertain the effects and utility of programs and methods;

3. the operation of the post-secondary sector including questions of purpose, governance, financing, and accessibility.

Within or in addition to the above, emphasis is warranted on questions of curriculum, instructional effectiveness including the utilization of staff, transition to work and continuing education.

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Lisa Collins deserves special thanks for deciphering my script and producing this report.

October, 1982 John Murray

Purpose

This investigation was undertaken to establish a list of priorities for research in education over the next five years. The scope ranges from early childhood through adult or continuing education. Both institutional and informal education and training throughout Ontario are included.

Several criteria were to be reflected in the priorities:

1. the potential for important decisions within the time frame;

2. the adequacy of the existing information base;

3. the likelihood that the results of serious study would be useful to decision makers.

The inquiry was to be focussed on broad issue areas rather than specific topics. The purpose of the study was to identify those issue areas in which a concentrated research effort over several years would be most likely to produce information to improve education in Ontario.

Literature Review

A search of ERIC and ONTERIS data bases failed to turn up any items on methods for developing research priorities. It was equally unsuccessful in revealing lists of priorities for research in education. Of course most research reports include a section outlining research that should be undertaken on related topics. And the numerous interest groups in and around education generally include some reference to research needs in their submissions to the Ministries or other institutions. But it seems that the task of establishing priorities for research across a wide range of issue areas in education has not been undertaken, at least not recently and not in Canada.

There is however a vast and growing literature about the future, the future of education and methods for studying the future. Only a few of these items will be cited here because it is under continuing study by the Strategic Planning Task Group.

A select list of Canadian, American and other book length materials 1970-80 relating to public policy and futures was prepared recently by Hugh A. Stevenson. This bibliography provides an excellent introduction to the field for persons seeking an overview or a starting point for those intending more extensive reading.

More directly focussed and provocative material can be found in the occasional papers from the Strategic Planning Task Group. An example is one published under the title "Highlights of the Environmental Scanning Program 1981-82". It deals with some of the major external forces expected to affect education in Ontario such as - the evolving knowledge base and technological change, limits and survival, congruence and accountability and the fundamental reconceptualizations that are reflecting these changes. Within these themes, such questions as the relationship between work and education, frequency of change, geographic power shifts, scale, women's role and age structure and demography are discussed.

Another aid t thinking about the future is John Kettle's Futureletter. In the Apri 30, 1982 edition he considered the question of the "big generation", those born between 1952 and 1965, now going to work. Kettle notes that they are unique in a number of ways. As a generation, they are the first to:

1. be born in an economic boom

2. be raised with T.V., Dr. Spock, modern medicine and easy access to illicit drugs,

3. be raised in an urban environment with high divorce rates among their parents, and

4. be entering the work force having completed high school.

These circumstances have combined to produce attitudes and values that are somewhat at variance with the expectations of many employers.

A cursory examination of a few books on forecasting methods uncovered none that seemed especially appropriate to the problem at hand. The Delphi method of estimating the probability of future events was considered but discarded because of serious criticisms made by H. Sackman, the difficulty of producing a definitive yet manageable list of candidate topics for research without extensive prior consultation, and the lack of sufficient time for several cycles of questioning.

Proposals for changes in educational methods or direction bear rather directly on research priorities. Such proposals take many forms. Some appear in keynote speeches or opening addresses to various bodies. Others take the form of books and booklets such as an "Educational Agenda for the 1980's". The reports of Commissions such as SERP and discussion papers such as "Continuing Education: The Third System" contain sets of interrelated recommendations for change. The emergence of these reports both reflects and stimulates public interest in the area which in turn affects the perceived needs for research.

A few examples of current research agendas were found during the study. Both were passed along by colleagues whose thoughtfulness is appreciated. The American Society for Information considered an agenda for research at their 1981 conference and the possibility of such an agenda for this country was discussed by R. G. Crawford at the 1982 meeting of the Canadian Association for Information Science.

In a paper presented at the 1982 AERA meeting, Terry Clark reported that the New York City school system has developed a list of research needs for the 1980's by interviewing sample members of each school constituency. That list was comprised of the following broad topics: teacher performance, the principal's role, staff development, student achievement, bilingual education, special education, local school improvement, school-community relations, teaching and learning and curriculum. Some research continues to be done in other areas but the system at least has a standard by which to assess its own activities.

In a number of issue areas, extensive proposals for research have been put forth recently.

Research on Post-Secondary Education in Canada is the subject of a recented published 104 page report by Edward Sheffield for the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The author states in the preface that -

"...the history of the enterprise is inadequately documented, goals are only dimly perceived, the characteristics of effective teaching are poorly understood, little is known about the outcomes..., the formulation of public policy in the field requires constant analysis and reanalysis, and the problems of financing and managing of systems, sub-systems and individual institutions of post-secondary education persist in forms old and new".

After citing several recently proposed lists of needed research, Sheffield put forth the following:

"- Purpose, Goals
- Access, Admission
- Curriculum
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment and Certification
- Research and Scholarship
- Community Services
- Outcomes
- Institutional Government
- Institutional Management
- Finance
- System Structure and Relations

In 1980, the Committee of Presidents of the CAATs published a monograph - The Year of the C.A.A.T. . The papers, edited by Charles E. Pascal, were presented at the 1979/80 Higher Education Colloquium Series at OISE. One set of papers which dealt with research needs included such questions as:

- "What is the role and effectiveness of independent learning programs?"
- "Can 'continuous intake' and 'continuous graduation' be implemented successfully into ongoing college programs?"

Research was also proposed relating to "students, research mechanisms, college management, the community, finance, the college system, faculty and staff, the environment, curricula and programs".

The Ontario Teachers' Federation devoted its 1981 submission to the cabinet to the "Effect of Computer/Communications Technology on Education". The summary expressed concerns about:

- structures
- pre-service teacher education
- professional development and in-service
- curriculum development and implementation
- hardware
- telidon
- software
- health and safety
- information for educators
- research into changing teaching roles
- public information

One section of the planning report issued in May 1982 by the Provincial Advisory Committee on Computers in Education contained twelve specific proposals for research including:

- monitoring of current initiatives
- identification of changes in utilization of school personnel
- teacher training
- health and safety
- integrated models of combinations of media
- impact of this type of learning on children
- a prototype board configuration

It should be obvious from these few examples that a complete list of research possibilities in and around education would extend well beyond the solar system and that it might indeed be infinite. It was not the purpose of this study to compile and prioritize such a comprehensive master list. Rather, it was to ascertain what consensus might exist about which broad issue areas should be given high priority over the next few years. The determination of precisely what to study within a priority issue area will be made through a process of dialogue and negotiation among the parties with a stake in the process and the results.

Method

One hundred and four face to face interviews were conducted in May, June and early July of 1982. All but four of the interviews were conducted by the principal investigator. The other four were conducted in French by Maurice LaMontaigne of the Ottawa Regional Office.

Those interviewed were a selected sample of individuals representing most facets of the educational enterprise as well as some employers, businesses, unions and agencies. It is important to note that this was not a random sample and was not intended to produce findings which represented the collective opinions of the educational community or of those with a major stake in its effectiveness. These particular people were chosen because of their experience, their positions or vantage points and their reputations as thoughtful, insightful individuals.

Some respondents invited colleagues to participate in the interviews. However, only one schedule was completed during each interview. While only the names of those persons with whom the appointments were made are included in Appendix 1, the contribution of their colleagues is acknowledged and appreciated. Interviews were conducted with 8 representatives from Universities, 5 from the Colleges

of Applied Arts and Technology, 8 officials from School Boards, 9 trustees, 7 representatives of Teacher or Faculty Organizations, 8 representatives from Faculties of Education, 9 from OISE, 7 from the Trade Union Movement, 22 private and public employers, 11 from various agencies and 10 individuals with unique involvement in education. No one refused to grant an interview and only 5 people were contacted with whom it was not possible to arrange a suitable time.

Two slightly different versions of an interview schedule were used. The version used with the majority of respondents who were directly involved in education is presented as Appendix 2. As the schedule shows, respondents were first asked to indicate some of the issues they would be dealing with over the next six months on which they would most like to have more information. These questions were repeated in terms of the next three to five years.

Respondents were then presented with a list of ten issue areas which had been compiled from lists of Ministry-sponsored research recently completed, in progress, and in the proposal stage as well as requests for information from ONTERIS and various survey results. The list was as follows:

- Use of technology in education (including microcomputers);
- Care and education of young children (birth to 4 years old);
- Curriculum development and implementation (including innovation);
- Basic literacy (including language learning, thinking etc.);
- Classroom environment and processes (including student evaluation and instructional methods);
- Educational administration (including school year, time-tabling, coordination between levels);

- Educational governance (including Community involvement/ control as well as alternative and private schools and financing of all levels);

- Transition to work (including work study, co-op education, on-site training and field placement);

- Continuing education (including job retraining); and

- Staff utilization (including evaluation and retraining).

Four questions were asked concerning each of these issue areas:

- How likely is it that important decisions will be made in this area in the next 3-5 years?

- Do you think that sufficient reliable information is available now for making those decisions?

- What additional information do you think would be useful in making decisions related to this issue area?

- In your opinion how important is it that research in this area be given a high priority (using a 1-10 rating scale)?

After answering these questions for each of the ten issue areas, respondents were asked to rate (using the same 1-10 scale) the importance of giving a high priority to research on any issues they had mentioned initially which were not included within the list of ten (which had been provided).

Then an opportunity was provided to add still other issue areas and to answer the four specific questions (likelihood of important decisions, likelihood of sufficient reliable information, etc.) for each of them.

After exhausting the possible issue areas which might warrant research, respondents were asked to identify the two or three issue areas that are most likely to be worth studying in terms of the greatest overall value to the improvement of education in Ontario.

Finally, respondents were queried regarding their most valued sources of information relating to education and probed with respect to their most valued publication, conference/meeting and person(s).

The second version of the schedule differed only in the portion preceding the presentation of the list of 10 issue areas. Respondents not directly involved in education were asked first to identify two or three issue areas educators should be dealing with, whether more research was indicated, and what kinds of information would be useful in making decisions.

Most interviews were completed within 45 to 60 minutes. A few took 30 minutes while the longest ran upwards of two hours.

The results were tabulated by hand and are presented in the following section.

Findings

Survey research assigns major significance to the relative proportions of respondents who express particular views. Opinions of majorities are generally deemed more important than minorities especially small ones. The results of this investigation should not be interpreted as if it were a conventional opinion survey. Neither the size of the sample nor the way it was selected permit generalizations to any larger population. Summaries of responses are provided, but readers are cautioned about drawing conclusions solely from the quantitative results. Due consideration must be given to the quality of arguments and to the overall significance of each issue area not only to education but to the community at large.

In the version of the interview schedule used with those directly involved in education, the first two sets of questions dealt with issues they expected to be facing within the next six months and within the next three to five years. This was not a useful distinction for most respondents since the issues facing them in the short term were expected to persist for some years. Many of the issues mentioned were already included in the "list of ten" which was provided. The importance of issues which were not in the list was established later in the interview. For these reasons, the responses to the first questions are not reported separately, rather they have been incorporated into the discussion of each issue area.

One consideration in establishing priorities for research is the probability that important decisions will be made. If the probability of significant change in an area is low, then the chances of research into that area having much impact are reduced. Very simply, if there is little public interest around an issue, it is unlikely that results from research into that issue will receive careful consideration. A summary of the replies to the question "How likely it is that important decisions will be made in (each of these ten) areas in the next 3-5 years" is shown in Appendix 3.

Decisions about the need for research into an area should also take account of the availability and sufficiency of information already existing in that field. A summary of the answers to the question "Do you think that sufficient reliable information is now available for making whatever decisions are to be made (in each issue area)?" are presented in Appendix 4.

For each issue area presented, respondents were asked to rate the importance of giving research into that area a high priority. Over two thirds of the respondents <u>did</u> provide importance ratings. The results are summarized in Appendix 5.

Information gathered on the foregoing questions and in response to the question "What additional information do you think would be useful in making decisions related to _____?", is summarized for each of the listed issue areas in the following sections:

Use of Technology in Education

Roughly nine out of ten persons interviewed expected that important decisions would likely be made in the next three to five years regarding the application of technology to education. A small majority felt that it was somewhat (19) or very (50) unlikely that sufficient reliable information was currently available for making those decisions. Fifteen times as many (91 vs. 6) indicated that it was important to give research into this area a high priority as indicated it was of slight or no importance. These results may be compared with those for other issue areas in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

The potential for research into the uses of technology in education is virtually limitless. Despite the widespread agreement about the importance of giving research in this area a high priority - a few respondents had reservations. One recalled the massive amounts of trivial research into educational T.V.; another noted that decisions may have to be made without sufficient reliable information while still another observed that change can and indeed does occur without any clear decisions being made. A few asserted that because the conventional classroom situation is inefficient, this is an area for immediate action rather than for study.

However, most respondents expressed a strong need for information about:

1. What technology is becoming available and how to anticipate developments?;

2. What is happening with current applications?; and

3. What alternatives to choose and how to pay for start-up costs including training?

Many acknowledged the need for both current descriptive or anecdotal information as well as carefully controlled longitudinal experiments. The rapid pace of development in information technology led a number of respondents to emphasize the need for close liaison with industry. This would allow decision-makers to anticipate both the availability of various technologies to education and the changes being wrought by that technology in the world of work.

Most of the interest in current uses concerned the positive and negative aspects of both the intended and unintended consequences of such applications. These tended to cluster in the following areas:

- Ergonomics. What are the physiological and psychological effects of various use levels at specific ages? What are the implications to health and comfort? How should the technology be adjusted to "fit" the learner?

- Socialization. What are the effects of placing students in front of consoles several hours a day? Will the social isolation have deleterious effects on communication skills? Will the lack of peer influence affect motivation or performance?

- Teachers. Will teachers accept the new technologies? What is the proper role for teachers in these environments? What retraining is needed and who will undertake it?

- Institutional Relationships. The need to develop courseware centrally will make local school boards obsolete according to some. Others saw the technology as the ultimate threat to provincial autonomy. But still others felt that this was our only protection against U. S. domination or control by the manufacturers.

- Curriculum. How can the basic skills needed in the coming society be defined? Can the knowledge and understanding of the hardware be safely discarded? At what age(s) and for how many hours a day can the technology be introduced? Will there be courseware in French? How will gender bias be monitored?

- Cost/benefit. Most respondents raised some version of the following questions. Which students learn which content/skills better/cheaper/quicker in which situations? How will the start-up costs including retraining be paid? What is an appropriately balanced allocation of resources for the next year or 5 years? Can we make a 5 or 10-year plan?

- Opportunities. The new technologies, especially microcomputers provide a rare chance to re-examine our basic assumptions about learning and schooling. The technology itself may facilitate such fundamental research in that data can be captured efficiently almost as a by-product of the ongoing operations.

Care and Education of Young Children

Approximately half of the respondents expected that important decisions would likely be made in the next three to five years regarding the care and education of young children. One-third felt that it was very (21) or somewhat (15) likely that sufficient reliable information was currently available in this area, while almost half (44) preferred not to answer or indicated they simply did not know. A similar proportion (45) assigned high (20) or moderate (25) importance to giving research in this field a high priority. But an almost equal number (41) gave it slight (20) or little or no (21) importance. The results are presented in the context of those for other issue areas in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

Most respondents did not see this as a top priority for research. There was general agreement that the importance of the early years has been firmly established, that the need for care has been documented and that decisions probably will be based on political rather than informational considerations.

However, a minority, including most labour representatives and a number of trustees, saw value in continued efforts to document the care provisions for the whole population as well as for special groups such as francophones, the gifted, children of working mothers and single parents, and those in rural communities.

In addition to factual descriptive studies, investigations were proposed into the relationships between family and care circumstances and performance in school. A study of the 6-8 year-old cohort could indicate which arrangements enhance the capacity to benefit from schooling. There were also proposals for longitudinal cross national studies to establish what should be taught early that cannot be taught better later. Basic work into the social basis for cognitive development and the role of non-parent agents in socializing children into language was proposed because of the high predictive power of preschool language on secondary school success.

Curriculum Development and Implementation

Some 62 respondents replied that it was very (36) or somewhat (26) likely that important decisions would be made with respect to curriculum in the next three to five years. A relatively smaller proportion (38) felt that sufficient reliable information was already on hand for making decisions while some (41) declined to estimate. However, almost two-thirds (64) indicated that it was highly (31) or moderately (33) important to give research into curriculum a high priority. These and similarly summarized results for other issue areas are arrayed in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

The limitations of the study's category system were especially evident in this area. In the first place, while basic literacy is obviously an integral part of curriculum, it had been reserved as a distinct issue area. The close connections between curriculum and guidance, apprenticeship, occupational orientation, teacher development and technology are equally obvious. Nevertheless, consideration of these matters has been deferred to other sections.

The fundamental questions of curriculum are essentially philosophical. They require an idea about society and inferences about the skills required to build it. As one respondent put it -

"The question is how to develop people's ability to participate in the democratic process of decision-making in both economic and political spheres. This is the only alternative to chaos. It requires an understanding of the economy and the skills and motivation to participate in civic/community life".

Many similar questions were raised, for example - "How can we define the skills needed in expanding occupations?" "How can we cope with the threat to holistic/humanistic education posed by technology?" "What social skills are essential?" "Can the schools instil a sense of responsibility?" "What curriculum would yield both literacy and democracy?"

There was a suggestion that "some wise thinking should be done by those at the frontiers of knowledge about the likely situation ten years from now" and another for a "A national standardized curriculum in math and other core subjects with a copy provided to every parent every year", as well as several for master plans and long range strategies.

The evolutionary nature of curriculum was acknowledged by many respondents who asserted that this was an area for ongoing study rather than narrowly defined investigations. The types of ongoing studies proposed fell into three broad areas: process of development, emphasis at specific levels, and specific content.

Process of Development

The relevance of other agencies and institutions to this process was emphasized by several respondents. They noted the need for liaison with business and labour and for the development of joint plans with the artistic community and cultural institutions.

There was a strong current of concern about implementation with numerous suggestions for evaluative follow-up studies. Specific proposals included a retrospective study of the effects of the elimination of Grade XIII departmental exams and another for the development of a system for continuous feedback to school boards about student performance in universities.

Emphasis at Specific Levels

At the elementary level there was a sense that too much was being attempted both in terms of coverage and change. Suggestions were focussed on what to cut out or defer. The extent of overload was indicated by such statements as "We have developed more than we can ever use but we don't stay with it long enough to see if it works" and "teachers are mortal too - how much change can be tolerated?".

The appropriateness of curriculum for general level students was pinpointed as an area for investigation at the secondary level. Some suggested that the program was watered-down-academic or beefed-up-vocational material not suited to the majority of young people who enter the labour force directly from secondary school.

Some suggested that the program approval process in the CAATs warranted study. The difficulty of sustaining the mandate for 30% general education with financial cutbacks was also mentioned.

The question of course proliferation and overlap was noted by a university respondent while there were several comments about the need for rationalization of both the universities and the colleges across the province and even across the country.

Specific Content

There was a chorus of comments about the need for either more or less emphasis to be given to specific content areas. Canadian studies need more attention according to some but another wondered if the existing emphasis was not diminishing the international content and making us too parochial. Appeals for greater concentration on "the basics" were tempered by those for fine arts, visual literacy, and general education. Appeals for more independent thinking and problem solving were counterbalanced by demands for greater emphasis on punctuality, politeness and decorum.

Both business and organized labour representatives indicated that they were not getting a fair shake. A number of employers are convinced that the role of the profit motive, private enterprise, and the entrepreneurial spirit must have greater attention and that the pro-labour bias of some curriculum guidelines must be eliminated. On the other hand the respondents from labour claimed with equal conviction that the legitimacy of unions as fundamental democratic institutions is ignored in the curriculum. They deplore what they see as the low status accorded to the role of organized labour and want it enhanced. The irony of this situation highlights the problem of achieving a consensus about a balanced curriculum.

An investigation of the currency and availability of textual materials in both classrooms and libraries was proposed by several respondents.

Others mentioned the status of second and third languages and the importance of preserving the existing linguistic reservoir.

Basic Literacy

Roughly one-third of the respondents expected important decisions to be made concerning basic literacy within the next three to five years. A similar proportion had no such expectation while the remaining third declined to speculate. The opinion that sufficient reliable information was likely available was held by 34 respondents.

Only 16 held the opposite view while half chose not to answer or said they didn't know. Some 20 people indicated it was highly important and 30 that it was moderately important that research into basic literacy be given a high priority. These results are summarized in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

Some respondents regarded this as a non-issue or one that is well under control. One even suggested that the preoccupation with basic literacy distracts from "other good stuff". Still, this area drew the strongest emotional response of all. The people who were upset about this were mainly employers but the concern was shared by some educators as well.

The depth of concern was evident from the string of adjectives - "deplorable, appalling, pathetic, horrible" and in the baldly unqualified assertions that: "Grade 12 recruits can't read, write, spell or speak the English language"; "our standardized test results are declining on both verbal and math skills"; "even university grads are really deficient on our tests"; "university graduates come here seeking clerical training but can't spell"; "we have a mandatory 12 week course in writing for the university grads we employ"; "we have to teach number recognition and accurate number transposition"; "the quality is extremely variable - how did they get that way?"; "they can't fill in the forms".

Many of those who expressed deep concern felt just as strongly that this is not an area for research but for action. In their opinion "the evidence is in", "it's been researched". One said "Surely we don't need more research to establish the facts". Some educators who acknowledged the problem suggested that the time required to do the job - whether 300 or 600 hours - must simply be taken from other areas.

But there were some proposals for research. Because the need for literacy skills may have risen and because expectations about acceptable levels of literacy may have increased, it was deemed useful to establish appropriate standards for today. Others proposed "to document the disaster" or in less provoca-tive words - "to establish the true extent of functional illiteracy and the extent to which it is denying people a place in the work world or in life". A couple of proposals related specific variables such as time on task and age to achievement.

While it is clear that research could be done in this area, it is even clearer that improved student performance would be much more appreciated by those expressing the strongest concerns.

Classroom Environment and Processes

Approximately half the respondents expect that important decisions will be made in the next three to five years relating to classroom environment and processes. One-quarter felt such decisions were unlikely. One-quarter also indicated that sufficient reliable information was currently available. A similar proportion held the opposing view while half offered no opinion about the adequacy of existing information in this area. Fifty-four people felt that it was highly (25) or moderately (29) important that research in this area be given a high priority. Twenty-two indicated it was relatively unimpor-tant and the remainder had no opinion. The findings may be compared with those for other issue areas by referring to Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

Proposals for research in this area fell into two somewhat distinct groups - student evaluation and studies of the effectiveness of schooling.

The utility of the Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool is of some interest. People would like to know how it's being used and how it is working. How do teachers and students use information about achievement? What effect does grading and testing have on student achievement? Is the effect modified by the status of achievement in the particular peer milieu?

All aspects of the total school environment such as discipline, sense of purpose, classroom management, and extra curricular activities may contribute to the effectiveness of schooling. Several respondents proposed that a comprehensive study of such matters would be worth doing. Within this umbrella several respondents proposed that the implementation of Bill 82 (particularly mainstreaming) be closely monitored.

One respondent proposed that the control of violence and vandalism should be a priority for research.

Educational Administration

The pattern of responses in this area resembled that for classroom environment and processes. Thirty-nine people expect important decisions will likely be made. Twenty-four find it likely that sufficient good information already exists while sixty didn't choose to answer. Forty-three assigned it high (18) or moderate (25) importance as a priority for research, while 29 felt it was relatively unimportant. All the numbers can be examined in context in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

While a long list of specific topics was proposed for study, very few were mentioned by more than one or two individuals.

There was some interest in questions of interface both between the elementary and secondary levels and between the secondary and post-secondary systems. Case studies of cooperative sharing and interinstitutional coordination were suggested and might well be useful. A couple of people raised questions about admission policies as related to extremely high attrition rates in some C.A.A.T. and university programs.

Several representatives from the business community proposed that utilization studies were needed. In the words of one, "There is a vast waste of plant, material and personnel; no business could possibly survive with this level of utilization". Another person suggested that extended hours would have to be considered because of the costs of new technology. There were also a few proposals to investigate alternatives to the present school year including the economic impact of such changes, the integration of students into the work force and the effects on staff and students of spacing out the breaks throughout the calendar year.

Other issues proposed for research included: consolidation at the senior public/junior high level; consolidation at the secondary level especially outside of urban areas; effects of semestering on young children; development of sophisticated management information systems; alternative forms of schooling; effectiveness of training materials; effects of shift work on staff; safety records of bus drivers under different contractual arrangements; uniform university entrance exams; relationship between Board organization and collective bargaining; social feelings about proximity to home; class size and the utilization of specialized teachers.

While these matters were important to some people there was no consensus among those interviewed that they should be given a particularly high priority. In fact, several suggested that the only questions worth considering were those that concerned the time students spent "on task".

Educational Governance

Fewer than half (43) of those interviewed felt that important decisions would be forthcoming in the next three to five years relating to educational governance. One-quarter felt that such decisions were relatively unlikely while 38 had no opinion. The proportion of those who thought that sufficient reliable information was likely

available (17) matched that who thought it was unlikely (16). Seventy-one wouldn't venture a guess. Almost half (46) indicated that it was highly (16) or moderately (30) important that research in this area be given a high priority. More detailed figures are provided in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

While a few respondents felt that research in this area was not indicated because decisions would be made on philosophical, emotional or political grounds, this was not the majority view.

At the university level, most concern related to the method of funding. Alternatives to the Basic Income Unit formula should be explored according to some; others believed that research into Federal-Provincial financial arrangements for post-secondary education would be useful despite the potential for such studies to become weapons in the ongoing dispute. Ethnographic studies of decision-making in universities were proposed as were investigations of public expectations and ways of imposing public priorities on the universities. The preservation of scholarship under conditions of high accountability for teaching is another serious concern.

Funding was also a concern at the college level. The system of annual allocations late in the year makes it impossible to develop multi-year plans. Studies of the impact of these arrangements on the quality of decisions, staff morale and student performance were proposed.

Two themes emerged in relation to the public school system. Research was proposed in the area of alternative and private schools and in the area of control and accountability.

Some respondents were genuinely puzzled by the apparent growth of private schools. "When upper middle class people already own the public school system why do they want private schools for their own kids?"; "Why do people send their kids to private schools? Do they get what they're seeking? Could it have been provided within the framework

of the public school system?"; "Since public schools are agents of society rather than the parent or student and since the attraction of private schools is their customer orientation, what can be done to refocus the public schools away from production toward customer acceptance?"; "Might it be worthwhile to document the variety and diversity within the public system and publicize the results?"; "Could the various groups be brought together to set objectives and develop a cohesive integrated plan?"; "Could a mission or goal statement be developed and advertised carrying the subliminal message - we're dedicated professionals doing our job - get off our backs!"; "What can we expect without a national educational policy?". Several proponents and opponents of the voucher system for extending public support to private schools suggested it merited serious study.

Questions in the area of control and accountability were centred around "the pull between uniformily centralized control and letting parents/people decide what ought to happen". There was skepticism and even cynicism about both extremes among most respondents. Specific proposals included: How does community involvement affect professional accountability and student achievement? What could be done to ensure that community representatives are truly representative of their communities? What are the boundaries of responsibility between community participation and professionalism? How can information be provided so that the public is properly informed? What are the rights of various participants in matters such as school closure? Why should every system and school be different? Could the school boards, CAATs and universities be merged into some overall structure? Would the new technology facilitate the development of viable smaller units of administration that are more readily governable?

Two other investigations were proposed: governance of French language schools and the effects of direct grants e.g., for textbooks, French, and special education.

Transition to Work

Some 61 respondents believe that important decisions affecting the transition to work will be made in the next three to five years. Only 11 suggested that such decisions were unlikely. Twenty-five thought that it was very (11) or somewhat (14) likely that sufficient, reliable information was currently available while 36 felt it was somewhat (14) or very (22) unlikely. Sixety-nine indicated it was highly (38) or moderately (31) important that research in this area be given a high priority. Only 20 felt it was of slight (12) or of little or no importance (8). Appendices 3, 4 and 5 contain the complete set of figures for this as well as the other issue areas.

The interest in this area was widespread among all groups of respondents. The comments were directed mainly toward work study programs, apprenticeship, and guidance counselling.

In the area of work study or co-op education, a wide range of questions were posed. Some were directed to studies of how to extend such programs while others concentrated on the improvement of programs already in operation. Typical questions included: What is the potential scope of these programs? How can they be extended with the existing shortage of work? How can they be protected against economic downturns? What are the sources of resistance? What are the relative responsibilities of the employers? - the educators? Which elements are best taught in school? in the workplace? Are they getting a truly representative set of experiences involving unions, UIC, and welfare? What role should the regular employees share in setting up and operating such programs? How can we provide meaningful, non-repetitive work doing "whatever" one morning a week? What do they learn pushing a broom? What can be done about the variability in program between schools? What are the costs and benefits to the student and to the employer?

There was unanimity among those who mentioned apprenticeship that the current system is not working. The proposals were for action rather than study although a couple of suggestions were made to look at the training policies and practices of union and non-union establishments and to assess the existing liaison between employers, labour, educators and government in the various trades. One respondent noted that because the application papers were only in English, francophones were disadvantaged.

At least a half dozen people indicated that job counselling services were inadequate. There were also comments that key choice points in course selection were not sufficiently highlighted for either students or parents. Again, most of the suggestions were for action rather than research.

There were a few questions about how to improve the predictions of the job market, the respective role of CAATs and secondary schools in preparation for work as well as comments about the lack of work ethic, pride in job, punctuality, and deportment among job seekers.

These general questions of attitude and motivation as well as those relating to women in non-traditional jobs could be incorporated into the kind of comprehensive follow-up study proposed by one respondent. He suggested a longitudinal investigation of "the impact of 1) different classroom situations 2) curriculum content 3) teacher training 4) teacher attitudes 5) funding provisions 6) pedagogical techniques and other variables on first - adjustment to and performance in the work place and second - adaptability to job changes." One obvious comparison within such a thorough long term study would be between conventional and work study programs.

Continuing Education

Approximately one-half of those interviewed found it very (36) or somewhat (15) likely that important decisions would be made in this area in the next three to five years. Twenty found it unlikely while a third offered no estimate of the probability. More or less equal numbers believed that it was likely (20) as that it was unlikely (25) that sufficient reliable information was already available regarding continuing education, while the majority (59) expressed no view on this matter. However, 60 respondents expressed the view that it was highly (25) or moderately (35) important that research in this area be given a high priority. This pattern may be compared with that for other issue areas by referring to Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

Proposals for research in this field dealt with demand, delivery and funding.

Demographic research was proposed into participation rates of the adult population and its constituent groups as well as their particular needs for education and retraining. The question of both society's and the employer's needs for skills and understandings was raised as well. What, for instance, are the skills of the unemployed population and what skills are needed for employment? What are the unique needs of special groups such as seniors, women, francophones and the poor? Could a national data base be developed by StatsCan to permit the analysis of trends and the development of projections?

A number of investigations of various systems for delivering education to adults were proposed. Which instructional techniques and materials work best with which people? What can be done to offset the time constraints of people, especially those in the work force? How can technology be used to make distance education more effective? Do we need legislation to ensure the availability of unpaid educational leave? Would partial jobs or work sharing allow those still working to be retrained? What can be done to improve coordination among the various institutions? What is the future role of voluntary non-governmental organizations if the provision of continuing education is formalized? How can effective counselling or "brokerage" be provided for adult learners?

Studies of financial arrangements for continuing education were deemed useful by some respondents. It was noted that the blurring of the distinction between full-time and part-time students in university warrants changes in the funding arrangements. There were some calls for a review of recent changes in regulations about grants for non-credit courses offered by school boards. The basic question in this area concerned the appropriate proportion of the cost to be charged to the student and the relationship between fees and accessibility/need.

Staff Utilization

Roughly one-half of the respondents indicated that it was very (36) or somewhat (16) likely that important decisions will be made in the next three to five years relating to staff utilization. Twenty felt this was relatively unlikely while the remaining 32 expressed no opinion. Only 19 suggested that it was very (5) or somewhat (14) likely that sufficient reliable information already existed while 25 felt that this was relatively unlikely. Sixty had no response. A majority (59) assigned high (29) or moderate (30) importance to giving research in this area a high priority. The complete figures are presented together with the results for the other issue areas in Appendices 3, 4 ad 5.

All questions of staff deployment, development and appraisal are confounded by the facts of an aging staff. While it is a growing consideration in colleges and universities, it is most evident in the public school systems. One board has already laid off all teachers hired since 1970 leaving a staff with an average age of 47. Under the "rule of 90" approximately 65% of all practising elementary teachers could retire within 10 years. The current problem of surplus teachers could rapidly become one of how to replace the existing work force in education. But at present the pressing question remains one of how to operate the system without new people and with continuing retrenchment.

Research was proposed in three areas: evaluation, inservice or professional development and retraining.

Considerable heat surrounds the issue of evaluation. Cries for the abolition of tenure and seniority and for tying compensation directly to performance appraisals were voiced by some business employers. But some weary administrators were less sanguine. They suggested that research was pointless and the matter was best left to the bargaining table. One even expressed his skepticism at this course of action by predicting more elaborate procedures would make evaluation more easily grievable, thereby making the boards more vulnerable to litigation for not living up to the contract.

Nevertheless some respondents expressed an interest in studies of the attitudes and expectations of staff, reciprocal rights to evaluation by subordinates and superordinates, criteria for evaluation and methods of involving staff in establishing procedures. An investigation of the relationship between both productivity and job satisfaction and two distinct modes of evaluation - continuous, interactive, informal and periodic, written formal was suggested, and might be designed to cover many of the relevant questions.

In the area of inservice or teacher development, respondents wanted to know the depreciation rate of teaching skills and the participation rates of teachers in programs to maintain these skills. There was also interest in motivation studies and in model programs that actually affect practice. The clarification of the respective roles of boards, federations, faculties and the Ministry in developing and operating teacher development programs was also proposed.

Questions posed as worthy of study in the area of retraining included: the capacity or latitude for retraining, and the affinity between existing occupations and those fields of work into which retraining is most feasible. Case studies of situations that have worked might be useful as would creative thinking about systems for

retraining that would provide both status and rejuvenation. Other questions related to selection procedures, costs and the availability of time. One respondent suggested that the time question be dealt with directly by giving everybody every fifth year off thus solving the unemployment problem incidently. While this may not be accepted any more readily than the initial proposals for a 40 hour week, it would certainly make continuing education a growth industry.

The underutilization of women in education and the use of volunteers in schools were other issues mentioned as warranting research. The questions about volunteers related to downgrading jobs for women, the ethics of using volunteers as a recruiting mechanism and the effects of volunteers on the morale of paid staff.

In the first part of the interview, respondents were asked to identify issues facing them about which they would like to have more information. Immediately after responding to the ten issue areas on the list provided, they were asked to identify other issue areas which they had not mentioned initially and which were not included on the list, but which in their opinion warranted serious systematic investigation. When these responses were examined, several additional issue areas emerged which were not on the list provided but which were volunteered by a significant number of people. These are discussed briefly at this point.

Educational Finance

Concerns in this area were centred around 1. the federal provincial financial arrangements for post-secondary education, 2. the formulas used for determining support for both the CAATs and the universities, 3. the level of provincial support for school boards including alternatives to the property tax and the effects of direct grants for specific programs or purposes and 4. the overall control of costs. As one respondent noted - "the money affects everything".

Purposes/Goals of Education

Many respondents made reference to a need for clarification of objectives, a master plan, or a reassessment of goals at some point in the course of the interview. Rapidly changing social values, family arrangements, and occupational structures were cited as factors which make the nature of future society unclear. Yet education programs must be developed and offered today to prepare young people to participate in that emerging society.

The Role of Universities

The concern about universities was fairly widespread and was not confined to the representatives from the universities. The central questions revolved around the preservation of universities as a brain trust for society - a place for scholarship and the responsibilities of the universities for both manpower training and for research into areas of immediate social relevance.

There were also questions about internal decision-making in the universities, the external constraints on the latitude for decisions as well as the need for a thorough rationalization of the entire university system. Accessibility, and the elasticity of participation rates for various groups are continuing policy issues which warrant serious study.

The general sense of the comments was that there are numerous fundamental and practical matters that warrant thorough investigation in the immediate future. This accords with the conclusions of Sheffield (see p4).

Educational Standards

Establishment of educational standards was a concern for a number of respondents. These people were seeking some mechanism for ensuring the comparability of marks between schools and between school boards. They want clearly established criteria for graduation and for admission to various post-secondary programs. Justification of a return to uniform province-wide exams would be the anticipated result of studies into standards.

What Should Be Given Priority?

After the research possibilities of various issue areas had been explored in some detail, respondents were asked to indicate which two or three issue areas of all that had been considered throughout the interview were likely to be worth studying in terms of the greatest overall value to education in Ontario. In other words, respondents were asked at this point to choose two or three issue areas from all those they themselves had volunteered and from the list provided which they believed most worthwhile as priorities for research. The 104 respondents provided 248 answers which are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Summary of responses regarding issue areas judged most worth studying

Issue area	Number of responses
Use of technology in education (including microcomputers)	36
Care and education of young children (birth to 4 years old)	4
Curriculum development and implementation (including innovation)	22
Basic literacy (including language learning, thinking, etc.)	12
Classroom environment and processes (including student evaluation and instructional methods)	10
Educational administration: (only interface questions)	2
Educational governance (including community involvement/control as well as alternative and private schools)	12*
Transition to work (including work study, coop education, on site training and field placement)	24
Continuing education (including job retraining)	12
Staff utilization (including evaluation and retraining)	22
Educational finance	11*
Purposes/Goals of education	10**
Role of the universities	6**
Educational standards	5**
Other	60
	248

* combined in original list

** not on original list

One third of the respondents mentioned the applications of technology as one of their answers. Research into this area is a clear priority for more respondents than any other area.

Approximately one fifth of the respondents gave one of their choices to curriculum, staff utilization, or the transition to work.

Research into basic literacy, classroom processes, educational governance, continuing education, educational finance, and the goals or purposes of education was judged to be most worthwhile by roughly 10% of the respondents.

Fewer people mentioned the care and education of young children (4), interface questions (2), the role of universities (6) and educational standards (5).

There were 60 additional responses which did not readily fit into the preceding categories. Three people mentioned equality of opportunity or the accessibility of higher education. Studies into the nature of learning, SERP, school consolidation, demographics, change and decision-making were each proposed by two people.

Each of the remaining 45 responses was mentioned only once. The topics ranged from very broad or fundamental matters such as "accepting world-wide social responsibility", "public attitudes toward intelligence", and "the social context" to fairly discrete topics such as "French as a second language", "self governance for teachers", "federal-provincial relations" and "parental involvement".

How Respondents Stay Informed?

At the close of the interview, respondents were asked about their most valued sources of current information about education. An attempt was made to establish the publication, conference and person they valued most as an information source.

The placement of these questions at the end of the schedule made them vulnerable to time pressure. The rapid shift to a completely new topic without sufficient structure and time to develop it no doubt contributed to the poor response. Accordingly the findings reported here should be regarded as impressionistic rather than definitive.

Publications

The Kappan and the Globe and Mail are probably the most widely valued sources of current information about education. Ministry reports, documents and memos were cited by a fair cross section of people. Other publications mentioned included the Times Educational Supplement, the New York Times Sunday edition, the Harvard Education Review, the Ontario School Trustees Council newsletter, the Canadian Education Association newsletter, and reports from the Education Relations Commission, the Ontario Economic Council, the Conference Board of Canada, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Statistics Canada and UNESCO.

Journals mentioned included the Review of Educational Research, Education Canada, Canadian Journal of Education, Journal of Higher Education and the Canadian Journal of Higher Education, and the Journal of Long Range Planning.

Several school administrators cited the School Board Journal and the School Administrator.

Both ERIC and ONTERIS information retrieval systems were mentioned. A number of respondents indicated that they stay current by scaning a wide variety of publications or by their access to library assistance or to a clipping service.

People

People seem to be valued at least as much as information sources as were publications. Outside the institution, many people mentioned their children or family members or friends that work in education. Within the institution, the value of colleagues was widely acknowledged.

Most respondents referred to a widespread network of contacts. When asked for names, many simply indicated that it depended on the topic. One asserted that he could reach the edge of knowledge on any topic within seven phone calls. There was practically no duplication of names among these respondents. The absence of widely acknowledged key sources was noted by several respondents. One said, "we miss Bascombe St. John" and another "there are no more gods".

Gatherings

Conferences or meetings were rarely volunteered as valuable sources of information. When probed, people offered rather predictable replies. Thus, school administrators mentioned OAEAO, trustees ALSBO or OSTC, academics AERA, CSSHE and business people the Board of Trade or Chamber of Commerce education committee. Some people indicated that they chose conferences by topic or theme rather than by professional affiliation.

Discussion

Any discussion of priorities for research must address the question of utilization. How will the findings be used? A key assumption underlying this study is that the prime function of research is to generate information to assist decision-makers in developing policy and establishing courses of action. Thus the study was intended to identify issue areas where:

1. There was some reason to expect important decisions might be made,

2. the adequacy of existing information was in doubt and

3. there was some possibility of newly generated information being taken into account by decision-makers.

The objective was to pinpoint those issue areas where systematic study would likely yield valid reliable information valuable to those with responsibility for making decisions.

The fact that research into a particular issue area is supported by some significant number of respondents is <u>not a sufficient condition</u> for automatically assigning priority to that issue. For an issue area to become a priority for research there must also be convincing evidence that available information is insufficient and/or inadequate and that newly generated information would probably improve the quality of policy development and decisions in the area.

In the course of the study, it became clear that this model of research utilization is not universally accepted and that there are many other uses for research. Several respondents maintained that policy questions <u>cannot</u> be phrased in researchable terms and that research funds should be directed only toward fundamental conceptual questions, such as the acquisition of language and the learning process. In the opinion of one respondent "research around policy

questions is invariably trivial". While such research may be trivial from the standpoint of theory development, it may still have considerable social significance for the people making or carrying out decisions and indeed for those who are living with the consequences and paying the bill.

Descriptive research which documents the facts about a situation was proposed in a number of areas. Child care and literacy are prime examples. Studies of these issues were not expected to reveal any startling new information nor to establish the feasibility of alternatives for action. Rather, they would describe the dimensions of the issue or "problem" and in so doing call attention to it.

In other areas, research was seen by some respondents to be an essential feature of an ongoing process. In the area of curriculum, updating content and evaluating the consequences of program implementation were seen as efforts to be maintained on a continuing basis rather than as discrete research projects.

There were also some calls for creative thinking (invention) rather than empirical research. Governance and resource allocation were two areas where some respondents claimed new ideas and approaches were needed.

It was obvious to many respondents that current syntheses or summaries of research could be very valuable. Many expressed frustration with the vast quantities of information swirling across their desks. Concise understandable reviews of the evidence and current thinking around a topic would be read and appreciated. Such reviews can be done quite economically from existing data bases. Indeed, the production of such summaries is a natural development for ONTERIS. It would transform existing information from an archival form to one that is more readily digestible and useable.

Conclusions

One issue area stands out from all the others as a priority. The application of information technology to education should be the number one priority for educational research for at least the next five years. This is a broad question with implications for resource allocation, curriculum and instructional methods. Careful investigation of the potential and pitfalls of the emerging technology is clearly indicated.

Many of the questions raised by respondents did not fall neatly into particular issue areas. Indeed many questions related to curriculum, classroom processes, staff utilization, transition to work, governance and finance have direct ramifications in the other areas. Furthermore, many of the significant questions posed were versions of "What are the consequences of providing some particular program to a specific group of students on their performance in another setting at some future time?" or "To what extent and with which students and approaches are we getting the results we want to achieve?" Rather than attempt to establish priorities for research between these related and interdependent issue areas, it may be possible to design a framework which incorporates a number of key questions and to conduct such integrative research over a period of years. This suggestion was put forward by one respondent and was reported on Page 25.

A comprehensive longitudinal study of a cohort of students at several levels should be considered. Such an investigation would be useful in assessing the relevance of existing curriculum including work study programs and the effectiveness of current provisions for guidance counselling. At the post-secondary level, the research would provide data about accessibility and participation rates of various segments of the population. It would permit an examination of the adequacy of current education for work and for life and establish the ongoing needs of young adults for continuing education. By incorporating questions from many issue areas, e.g. literacy, special education, minorities, women, such research could cast light on specific current concerns and yet appreciate in value and relevance over time.

Within such a comprehensive framework or as an alternative or supplement to it, attention should be directed to curriculum (especially implementation), classroom and school effectiveness, staff development and deployment, the transition to work and continuing education. Specific questions warranting research in each of these areas were explored in preceding sections.

In the short term, systematic monitoring of the implementation of Bill 82 should be considered. It should establish the extent to which the provision of these services is having its intended effects and the incidence of any unforeseen consequences.

Some attention should also be given to research at the post-secondary level. The question of finance is obvious but the role and governance structures of both the universities and the CAATs may also merit a thorough review. Some years have passed since the last Commission on Post-Secondary Education and much has changed. There are serious questions about the relationships between the universities themselves and between the universities and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. The Sheffield Report (Page 4) explored the research needs of the post-secondary sector in some detail and made a strong case for a concentrated effort in this area. Because of the dirth of current information regarding post-secondary education, the possibility of important decisions being made within the next three to five years and the fundamental significance of this sector to the province and the country, the assignment of priority to research in this area seems warranted.

No attempt was made in this study to reproduce or reconcile the proposals for research offered in the annual briefs from the Federations or other interest groups. Presumably, the disposition of such requests will be negotiated on an ongoing basis.

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Appendix I

List of Respondents

Mr. Michael Adams
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Environics Research Group

Ms. Fern Alexander
Superintendent
Metropolitan Toronto Police

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Secretary
Ontario Public School Men's Teachers' Federation

Mr. Bruce Archer
Executive Assistant
Ontario Teachers' Federation

Mr. Dan Benedict
International Representative
United Auto Workers

Mr. John Boich
Executive Director
Ontario Ass'n of Education Adminis. Officials

Mr. Bruce Bone
Vice-President & Associate Treasurer
Noranda Mines Limited
Commerce Court West

Mr. Bob Bradley
Member
Board of Governors
George Brown CAAT / Ontario Housing Corporation

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Regional Manager Employee Relations
Canadian National Railways

Dr. Dale Burnett
Professor
Faculty of Education
Queen's University

Mr. Wayne F. J. Busch
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Georgian CAAT

Mr. John Calvert
Director of Education
Canadian Union of Public Employees

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The Globe and Mail

Mr. Jack M. Clemens
Employee Relations Manager
Field Services - Ontario
Imperial Oil Limited

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Education Relations Commission Ontario

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Ontario College of Art

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Mr. Larry Gerner
Director, Market Research
Ontario Educational Communications Authority

Mr. Duncan Green
Director of the School of Continuing Studies
University of Toronto

Mr. Gerry K. Griffin
National Personnel Relations Manager
Simpsons-Sears Ltd.

Mr. Sam Guindon
Director of Research
United Auto Workers

Dr. R. P. Roger Guindon
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University of Ottawa

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Mr. I. C. Harris
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Professor
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President
Algonquin CAAT

Mr. I. Gordon Jones
Chief Superintendent - Central Services
Carleton Board of Education

Reverent J. Frank Kavanagh
Executive Director
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

Dr. John Kervin
Professor
Centre for Industrial Relations
University of Toronto

Dr. Alan King
Professor
Faculty of Education
Queen's University

Mr. Arnold Krever
Director
Hamilton Board of Education

M. Gisèle Lalonde
Directrice générale
L'Association francaise des Conseils scolaires

Mr. Doug S. Lawless
Executive Director
Association of Large School Boards in Ontario

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Appendix 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (I) RESEARCH PRIORITIES

This project is being done to establish which areas in education are most in need of serious study over the next 3-5 years.
As far as possible, the Ministry wishes to concentrate its research effort where it will have the greatest value to decision making.
To assist in this work, we are consulting people such as yourself throughout the Province. We want to know what you think the key issues will be and what kinds of information should be collected to help make the important decisions.
Let us start with the immediate future and the decisions you (or educational decision makers) will be dealing with the next six months.

1.0 Of the issues related to education you expect to be dealing with over the next six months -
What are some of the issue areas on which you would most like to have more information? (Probe for 3)

1.2 What kinds of information would you be looking for concerning--
(Repeat each issue verbatim).

(Now let us look ahead a little further - to some of the important decisions you will be dealing with over the next 3-years)

2.0 What are the two or three issue areas on which you would most like to have more information to help make those decisions? (Probe for 3)

2.2 What kinds of information would you be looking for concerning--
(Repeat each issue verbatim).

[THE FOREGOING QUESTIONS WERE MODIFIED AS FOLLOWS FOR RESPONDENTS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN EDUCATION]

Let us look ahead 3-5 years, and consider some of the important issues educators should be dealing with.

1.0 In your opinion, what are some of the issue areas that should be given serious attention? (Probe for three)

1.2.1 Do you think more research is needed concerning (Repeat each Issue verbatim)? What kinds of information would be useful in making decisions?

We have identified 10 Issue areas that are currently receiving a lot of attention. (Present list). Each of these areas obviously includes a number of specific topics - some of which we may talk about later. For now, I would like you to answer a few brief questions about the emphasis each of these broad issue areas may warrant. I am asking the same four questions - likelihood that important decisions will be made - likelihood that sufficient, reliable information is available now - what additional information is needed - and finally the importance on a 1 to 10 scale (with one being high) of giving research in the area a high priority.

3.0 Issue area M - USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION
(INCLUDING MICROCOMPUTERS)

3.1 How likely is it that important decisions will be made in this area in the next 3-5 years?

very likely___ somewhat likely___ somewhat unlikely___ very unlikely___ Don't Know___

3.2 Do you think that sufficient, reliable information is available now for making those decisions?

very likely___ somewhat likely___ somewhat unlikely___ very unlikely___ Don't Know___

3.3 What additional information do you think would be useful in making decisions related to (repeat issue area M)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.4 In your opinion how important is it - that research in this area be given a high priority?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the highest importance			moderate importance			slight importance			NO importance

[THE PRECEDING QUESTIONS WERE REPEATED FOR EACH AREA LISTED]

LIST OF ISSUE AREAS IN WHICH RESEARCH MAY BE NEEDED

M. Use of technology in education (including microcomputers)

N Care and education of young children (birth to 4 years old)

O. Curriculum development and implementation (including innovation)

P Basic literacy (including language learning, thinking etc.)

Q Classroom environment and processes (including student evaluation and instructional methods).

R Educational administration (including school year, timetabling, coordination between levels)

S Educational governance (including community involvement/control as well as alternative and private schools and financing of all levels)

T Transition to work (including work study, coop education, on site training and field placement).

U Continuing education (including job retraining)

V Staff utilization (including evaluation and retraining).

13.0 Earlier, (Question 1) you indicated that you (educational decision makers) would like to have more information concerning several issue areas. Using the same 1-10 scale of importance, please indicate the importance of giving research in these particular areas a high priority.

13.1 How important is it that research on (repeat issue area A from Question 1 verbatim) be given a high priority?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the highest importance			moderate importance			slight importance			NO importance

13.2 How important is it that research on (repeat issue area B from Question 1 verbatim) be given a high priority?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the highest importance			moderate importance			slight importance			NO importance

13.3 How important is it that research on (repeat issue area C from Question 1 verbatim) be given a high priority?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the highest importance			moderate importance			slight importance			NO importance

14.0 What other issue areas do you think warrant serious study over the next 3-5 years. (Probe for two and repeat the four questions for each)

15.0 In terms of the greatest overall value to the improvement of education in Ontario, which are the <u>two or three</u> issue areas that are most likely to be worth studying?

16.1 What are your most valued sources of current information relating to education?

(Probe for most valued publication//conference/meeting//person(s))

APPENDIX 3

Summary of responses regarding the likelihood that important decisions will be made in the next 3-5 years in each issue area

Issue Area	very likely	somewhat likely	somewhat unlikely	very unlikely	DK/ NA
technology in education	90	3	2	0	9
care/education of young children	26	23	20	18	17
curriculum development & implementation	36	26	7	4	31
basic literacy	19	18	14	17	36
classroom processes	28	20	15	10	31
educational administration	21	18	10	12	43
educational governance	31	12	7	16	38
transition to work	38	23	5	6	32
continuing education	36	15	8	12	33
staff utilization	36	16	8	12	32

Appendix 4

Summary of responses regarding the likelihood that sufficient information is now available for making decisions in each issue area

Issue Area	very likely	somewhat likely	somewhat unlikely	very unlikely	DK/ NA
technology in education	5	14	19	50	16
care/education of young children	21	15	11	13	44
curriculum development & implementation	15	23	8	17	41
basic literacy	19	17	4	12	52
classroom processes	14	14	12	12	52
educational administration	14	10	10	10	60
educational governance	11	6	6	10	71
transition to work	11	14	14	22	43
continuing education	6	14	12	13	59
staff utilization	5	14	11	14	60

APPENDIX 5

Summary of responses regarding the importance of giving a high priority to research into each issue area

Issue Area	the highest importance (1-2)	moderate importance (3-5)	slight importance (6-8)	little/no importance (9-10)	DK/ NA
technology in education	66	25	4	2	7
care/education of young children	20	25	20	21	18
curriculum development & implementation	31	33	12	10	18
basic literacy	20	30	17	15	22
classroom processes	25	29	13	9	28
educational administration	18	25	18	11	32
educational governance	16	30	16	14	28
transition to work	38	31	12	8	15
continuing education	25	35	9	14	21
staff utilization	29	30	6	12	27